

ally accurate, a delightful combination of naive explorer, excited child, and scientist wannabe. And I've wanted to read more of Loti ever since I came across the usual excerpts from his journals years ago. In fact, the last time I was on the island I purchased a tiny little volume entitled *Isla de Pascua*, composed entirely of Loti's journal extracts (Libros del Ciudadano/LOM Ediciones, 1998). It's in Spanish, so I purchased it more as a keepsake than as something I could fully appreciate (languages other than English being not my thing, alas). But now, thanks to Ann Altman and her translation of Loti – which, like the other translations, accurately and powerfully sustains the flavor and substance of the writing – I'm re-living Easter Island's past once again. And, in some ways, for the first time. ♦

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE RIDDLE OF THE PRE-CONTACT WORLD MAPS SOLVED

For the spring issue of *RNJ*, Vol. 18(1), I wrote an article with the title "The Riddle of the Pre-contact World Maps", giving a review of the book *1421, The Year China Discovered America* by Gavin Menzies. This book is relevant to Rapa Nui because on page 402 it shows a map on which Easter Island figures as one of the "Chinese bases across the Pacific Ocean".

My conclusion about this book was that the writer, an admirer of Chinese civilization, stated that around 1421 the Chinese were, in effect, the first circumnavigators of the globe. However, the journal keeper on board Admiral Cheng Ho's fleet only claims that they came as far as Malindi on the East African coast, but not around Cape of Good Hope into the Atlantic. I could find no proof that Menzies' claims were convincing, but as he is a retired submarine captain from the British Royal Navy and therefore likely knows more about astronomy, geography and trigonometry than I do, I accepted what he said about those subjects. I was hindered by the fact that, in his book, the Pirî Reis map was reproduced in a severely reduced size, preventing one to discern the details. I also was intrigued by the abundant, but illegible, text on this map, which plays a vital role in Menzies' thesis. This Pirî Reis map of 1513, made by a Turkish admiral and predating Magellan's departure by eight years, indicates – according to Menzies – the exact outline of the South American coast including the Strait of Magellan and down to Antarctica. That needed an explanation; in my opinion, its basis could not be the Chinese maps, so I remained with the question: whose maps? I ended my article with the following sentence: "I consider this one of the most intriguing questions of history and I think that more effort should be spent to solve it...."

After sending the article to the editors, I reread it several times and at a certain moment I said to myself: "why don't you volunteer and make an effort yourself if this riddle of the pre-contact maps intrigues you so much?" Well, I did, and now I can inform readers of *RNJ* that I have solved the riddle. The answer is – with the benefit of hindsight – rather obvious: there are no pre-contact maps.

In order to reach this conclusion some research was in-

deed necessary. In the first place, I had to obtain a copy of the Pirî Reis map in its actual scale, thus allowing me to recognize its details. I had heard that posters of this map were on sale in the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul so I sent an emissary to Istanbul, who brought me the poster. To my dismay, I then discovered that the remarks on the map were in Arabic. I then approached the editor of the map, a friendly Turkish woman, who advised me to buy the book "The Pirî Reis Map of 1513" by Gregory McIntosh. This book tells you everything you ever wanted to know about this map, including the translation of nearly all the remarks on it. There is quite a lot of text, practically half the South American continent is filled with it, and there are indications next to most of the islands and bays. It is, of course, of great importance to learn what Pirî Reis himself has to say. In this respect, his map differs from all others of the period.

Menzies states that the animals shown in South America on the Pirî Reis map are only known there and unknown in the rest of the world, and that is proof they were drawn by eye witnesses. Now that I was able to see the map in its proper scale, the first "animal" that drew my attention was a human without a head but with his eyes, mouth, etc., in his breast. This is an illustration of the myth that such people were living in South America. A cow-like figure is a bastard of an ox and a unicorn with one crooked horn; the guanaco could just as well be a dog or a fox; and a monkey is drinking a glass of red wine. Instead of proving that these pictures of non-existing animals were made by eye-witnesses, as Menzies states, they are the proof of the exact opposite.

Now for the geography: the translations on the Pirî Reis map of South America southward of Cabo de San Roque, on the Eastern corner of the continent, are quite clear; they go as follows: Rio Sao Francisco, Bahia de Todos los Santos, Cabo Frio, Bahia de Rio de Janeiro, Angra dos Reis. You can follow this on a modern map. But there they stop; his indications do not go further. This is as far as the Portuguese came at that time.

A vital part of Menzies' reasoning is formed by the Southern compass rose on the Pirî Reis map, which he states is exactly over the Falkland Islands, because there you have the star Canopus right overhead and this allows you to find the exact South Pole. He highly praises the Chinese that they have discovered it. On page 122, Menzies reproduces the Pirî Reis map of the Southern Pacific next to a modern one of his own – but one that conveniently does not show latitude indications. The Pirî Reis map does not either, but with it in hand you can see that there are three compass roses in the Atlantic. The Northern one is on a latitude halfway between the Canary and the Cape Verde Islands. It is obvious that it indicates the Tropic of Cancer at 23.5 degrees North. The Central compass rose is at approximately the latitude of the mouth of the Amazon River, and it is obvious that this indicates the equator. The Southern compass rose is nearly at the same latitude as Pirî's indication of Rio de Janeiro, and it is equally obvious that it indicates the Tropic of Capricorn at 23.5° South. Menzies says that this Southern compass rose is at the latitude of the Falkland Islands, a pivotal point in his reasoning. But the exact location of the Falkland Islands is 52° 40' South, as Menzies states himself. Had he read Pirî Reis' indications, he would

have realized that he was making a monumental mistake of nearly 30 degrees!

In Menzies' interpretation, the border of drift ice and pack ice already starts just south of Rio de Janeiro Bay. The conclusion must be that the Pirî Reis map only gives an exact outline of the South American coast to approximately the Tropic of Capricorn. Further south there are no place names indicated, and so from there on his map must be fantasy. If, for comparison, we look at the Cantino world map of 1502, it is more "businesslike", and we see that it stops a little south of the Tropic of Capricorn. Do not forget that, in 1500, the Portuguese had discovered the Brazilian coast and navigated along it; the Bay of Rio de Janeiro was discovered and given that name on 1 January 1502. Pirî Reis says in his own comments that he based his map on the map of Columbus, taken from a Spanish sailor in 1501 (he repeats Columbus' mistakes in the Caribbean on his map) and from Portuguese world maps. There is no reason to believe that this is not true. Therefore the Pirî Reis map correctly depicts what had already been visited and mapped a few years before and the rest, just as with the mythological animals, the headless man and an elephant shown in the Sahara desert, is fantasy. These were illustrations to enlighten and amuse a public that was eager to learn about the mysteries of the unknown world.

Final conclusion: there are no pre-contact world maps. Menzies' ideas about the Chinese, as well as his interpretation of the Pirî Reis map are a hoax.

But now television has gotten into the act; Menzies' theories will soon be on a TV in your living room.

Herbert von Saher

For further reading:

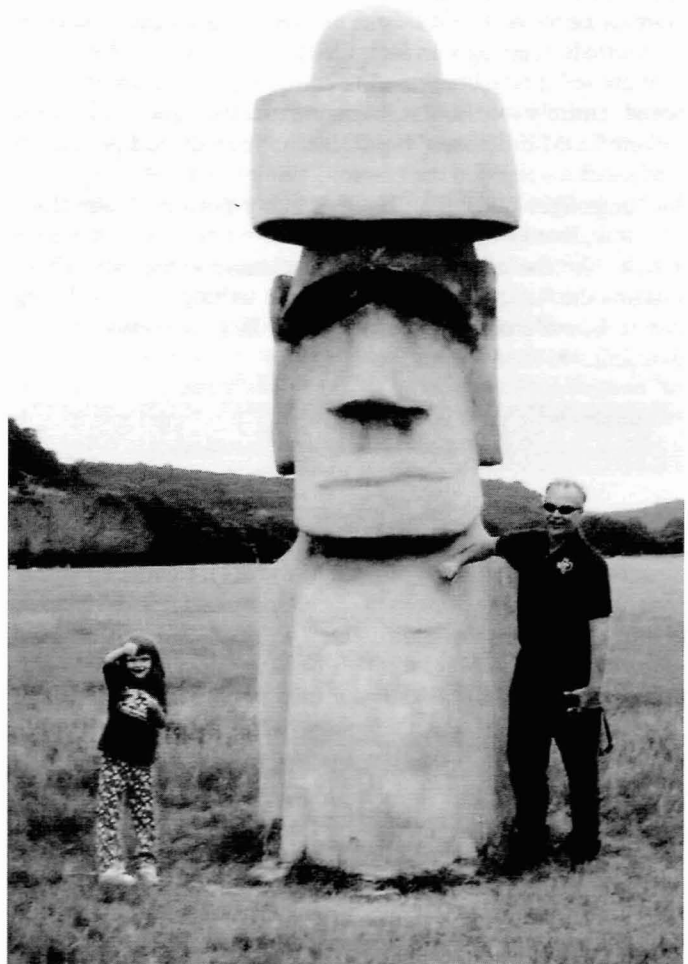
Gregory C. McIntosh, *The Piri Reis Map of 1513*, The University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia & London, 2000.

MOAI SIGHTINGS

WE HAVE A MOAI SIGHTING IN CENTRAL TEXAS! Rapanuiphile Mark Adkins has alerted us to two *moai* located in the Texas Hill Country, 75 miles northwest of San Antonio. It is called Stonehenge II and is located on a private ranch owned by the Sheppard family. There, on an obscure winding farm road, two miles from Hunt, Texas, is this amazing sight.

It all began around 1989 when the late Al Sheppard was given a large hunk of limestone (a left-over from his neighbor's patio project). Al placed it near the road but, after setting it up and placing a man-made arch behind it, it still seemed to be lacking that 'certain something'. The stone reminded him of England's Stonehenge and so, with the help of friend Doug Hill, he built an exact replica of Stonehenge at about 50-60% of the scale of the original structure. The *moai* were added later, following a visit that Al made to Rapa Nui. All are constructed from steel posts, rebar, and wire mesh, with concrete fill and graphite-plaster overlay. The statues are about 13 feet tall, including the *pukao*.

Sheppard's family continues the tradition of allowing the public free access to wander around amongst the ruins and statues. (Photo by Mark Adkins).



SANDY BROADRICK-ALLEN sends news about *moai* sightings in some gambling establishments, one aboard the casino boat, *Paradise*, in East Peoria, Illinois, and another on a one-cent machine at Harrahs Casino in St. Louis, Missouri. A firm named Aristocrat manufactures a nickel slot machine entitled "Easter Island". *Moai* can appear on any of the five reels, and all five are different (one laughs, another has a sparkling gold tooth, etc.). Or only a part of a *moai* may appear on a reel. When any part appears it functions as a wild symbol, thereby matching any paying combination. A small white flying saucer buzzes in at the top of the screen from time to time. If it comes in while one has a full *moai* in the center reel, it turns the *moai* to gold and pays off triple the amount. Sandy didn't mention whether she won or lost.

THE LATEST REI CATALOG has "Modern Water Bottles, Ancient Flair" advertised, with one of the designs being *moai* heads, and called "Bison Tiki Bottles" (we are not making this up). They come in yellow or purple and are truly ugly. OUR "CONTEST" TO PROVIDE A CAPTION for the mysterious parachuting *moai* in our last issue (*RNJ* 18(1):71) brought forth some fun replies. Elizabeth Clift of Phoenix came up with "Holy Hotu Matu'a!! The wind is pushing us to the slope of a volcano." Our Netherlands correspondent, Herbert von Saher, sent in "At last the Proof !! Moai WERE transported by